

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 01007 201051Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A W MANILA 1007

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ORIT, ELAB, RP

SUBJECT: CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS: LABOR AFFAIRS

REF: MANILA 16892 (1975)

BEGIN SUMMARY: FIRST MONTHLY DIALOGUE OF CHURCH-DOL PANEL OCCURRED JANUARY 13. LABOR SECRETARY OPLE WARNED AGAINST MASS DISORDERS INSTIGATED FOR POLITICAL REASONS, AND CONFIRMED GOP WILL STAND PAT ON ITS DECISION BAN FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN TRADE UNION ACTIVITY. AS HAS BEEN CASE WITH CMLC, NEW JOINT PANEL COULD PROVIDE USEFUL FORUM FOR CLEARING UP MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND JUST PLAIN LETTING OFF STEAM. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM BOTH DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) AND CHURCH SOURCES, FIRST MONTHLY DIALOGUE OF CHURCH-DOL PANEL TOOK PLACE JANUARY 13. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THIS GROUP ESTABLISHED BY CHURCH-MILITARY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CMLC) LATE LAST YEAR (REFTEL) AT HEIGHT CHURCH AGITATION AGAINST NEW LABOR DECREE (P.D. 823).

2. CHURCH PANEL, HEADED BY MANILA AUXILIARY BISHOP GAUDENCIO ROSALES, INCLUDES PROMINENT JESUITS FR. PACIFICO ORTIZ (ALSO ACTIVE IN CMLC) AND FR. HORACIO DE LA COSTA, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 01007 201051Z

JUSTICE J.B.L. REYES (FORMER PRESIDENT OF INTEGRATED BAR

ASSOCIATION), FR. EFREN RIVERA, DOMINICAN (VICE RECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS), AND FR. TEODORO BUHAIN (ASSISTANT SECGEN OF CBCP - CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE), DOL PANEL, HEADED BY LABOR UNDERSECRETARY AMADO INCIONG, INCLUDES CARMELO NORIEL (DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF LABOR RELATIONS), JUDGE ALBERTO VELOSO (CHAIRMAN, NLRC), COMMISSIONER RICK CASTRO (NLRC), AND FRANCISCO ESTRELLA (LABOR SECRETARY BLAS OPLE'S MAN FRIDAY).

3. OPLE WAS GUEST AT CHURCH-DOL JOINT PANEL'S INITIAL MEETING. PRESS ACCOUNTS JANUARY 18 EMPHASIZED OPLE'S "WARNING" THAT ILLEGAL STRIKES AND OTHER FORMS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE WILL BE FIRMLY DEALT WITH. HE DECLARED "CLIMATE OF LIBERALIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW POLICIES CAN CHANGE RAPIDLY, PERHAPS OVERNIGHT, IF, THROUGH MISGUIDED ZEAL AND TEMPTATIONS OF GLORY AND GAIN. CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN OUR SOCIETY SUCCESSFULLY AGITATE FOR MASS DISORDERS" FOR POLITICAL REASONS. STRESSING THAT TRADE UNIONISM IN PHILIPPINES IS POLITICAL RIGHT RESERVED ONLY TO CITIZENS, OPLE CONFIRMED THAT GOP WILL STAND PAT ON ITS DECISION TO BAN FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN TRADE UNION ACTIVITY (P.D. 823 - SEE MANILA 15475, 1975). ALTHOUGH PRESS CHOSE INTERPRET OPLE'S REMARKS AS TAKING TOUGH STANCE, CHURCH PANEL MEMBER TOLD EMBASSY HIS PRESENTATION HAD BEEN RELAXED AND MODERATE.

4. KICKOFF MEETING OF JOINT PANEL APPARENTLY CONCENTRATED ON GROUND RULES FOR SUBSEQUENT GATHERINGS. WAS DECIDED AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (FEBRUARY 5) WOULD CENTER ON DISCUSSION 823. CHURCH PANEL HAS TAKEN POSITION (LARGELY BASED UPON VIEWPOINT OF JUSTICE REYES) THAT AMENDED 823 (SEE MANILA 17655, 1975) ACUTUALLY PROVIDES ONLY "MINIMAL IMPROVEMENTS" WITH RESPECT RIGHT TO STRIKE PROVISIONS, WITH SO-CALLED "VITAL INDUSTRIES" (EXEMPTED FROM STRIKES) STILL UNDEFINED.

5. COMMENT: AS HAS BEEN CASE WITH CMLC (WHICH, INDIDENTALLY, HELD MOST RECENT MONTHLY MEETING JANUARY 16), NEW CHURCH-DOL PANEL COULD PROVIDE USEFUL FORUM FOR CLEARING UP MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND JUST PLAIN LETTING OFF STEAM. AS ONE DOL PANEL MEMBER TOLD US, IF ONE ACCEPTS PREMISE BOTH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 01007 201051Z

SIDES HAVE BEST INTERESTS OF WORKING MAN AS GUIDING PRINCIPLE, THEN JOINT PANEL IN POSITION MAKE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO INDUSTRIAL PEACE. EMBASSY ACCEPTS PREMISE BUT WITHHOLDS JUDGMENT ABOUT DECISIONS PANEL CAN ULTIMATELY MAKE. OPLE'S WARNING AGAINST ILLEGAL STRIKES IS UNDERSTANDABLE: OF SOME 40 PENDING STRIKE NOTICES FILED WITH DOL SINCE 823 AMENDED LAST MONTH, 10 UNIONS HAVE JUMPED GUN AND GONE ON STRIKE BEFORE EXPIRATION MANDATORY

30-DAY COOLING-OFF PERIOD. NUMBER OF OTHER UNIONS HAVE
INITIATED STRIKE ACTION WITHOUT EVEN BOTHERING FILE STRIKE
NOTICE. OPLE'S REFERENCE TO MASS DISORDERS FOR
POLITICAL REASONS DISCUSSED SEPTTEL. STULL

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